
AP Comparative Government and Politics

Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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Free Response Question 1

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AP[®] COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

2018 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 1

3 points

One point is earned for correctly identifying a country studied in the AP Comparative Government course that uses proportional representation as part of its electoral system.

Acceptable identifications include:

- Russia
- Mexico
- The UK in Scotland, Wales, and the London Assembly

One point is earned for correctly explaining how legislative seats are allocated in a proportional representation system.

Acceptable explanations include:

- Rewards seats to parties in legislatures in proportion to votes received.
- Percentage of vote the party receives equals the percentage of seats for the party in the legislature.

One point is earned for correctly describing the impact of proportional representation electoral rules on a party system.

An acceptable description is:

- Proportional representation creates a multiparty system.
- Greater voice for minority parties or more opinions or wider party spectrum.
- Makes gaining a majority more difficult.
- Coalition governments more likely.
- Greater voice to voters to have their views represented.
- Individual candidates less important and parties more important.

A score of zero (0) is earned for an attempted answer that earns no points or for an off-task answer.

A score of dash (—) is earned for a blank.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Section II

Time—1 hour and 40 minutes

Directions: You have 1 hour and 40 minutes to answer five short-answer concept questions, one conceptual analysis question, and two country context questions. Unless the directions indicate otherwise, respond to all parts of all eight questions. It is suggested that you take a few minutes to plan and outline each answer. We suggest that you spend approximately 30 minutes total on questions 1 through 5, 30 minutes on question 6, and 40 minutes total on questions 7 and 8. These suggested times do not reflect the weight of the questions as part of your AP exam score. In your responses, use substantive examples where appropriate.

Short-Answer Concepts: We suggest that you spend approximately 30 minutes total on questions 1 through 5.

1. Identify a country in the AP Comparative Government course that uses proportional representation as a part of its electoral system. Explain how legislative seats are allocated in a proportional representation system. Describe the impact of proportional representation electoral rules on a party system.

1) A country that uses proportional representation as part of its electoral system is Russia. Legislative seats are allocated according to percent of votes received. Once receiving a minimum threshold percentage of votes, seats are allocated to parties comparatively to percent of votes they received. The impact of proportional representation electoral rules on the party system is that it encourages greater amounts of parties, as it only requires a certain percent of votes to earn legislative representation. It also strengthens the power of the party, since seat numbers are distributed by party. This makes it a race between party ideology, not those of individuals and make parties the central power of government.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

1B

Section II

Time—1 hour and 40 minutes

Directions: You have 1 hour and 40 minutes to answer five short-answer concept questions, one conceptual analysis question, and two country context questions. Unless the directions indicate otherwise, respond to all parts of all eight questions. It is suggested that you take a few minutes to plan and outline each answer. We suggest that you spend approximately 30 minutes total on questions 1 through 5, 30 minutes on question 6, and 40 minutes total on questions 7 and 8. These suggested times do not reflect the weight of the questions as part of your AP exam score. In your responses, use substantive examples where appropriate.

Short-Answer Concepts: We suggest that you spend approximately 30 minutes total on questions 1 through 5.

1. Identify a country in the AP Comparative Government course that uses proportional representation as a part of its electoral system. Explain how legislative seats are allocated in a proportional representation system. Describe the impact of proportional representation electoral rules on a party system.

Russia uses proportional representation in the Duma. Any party that earns at least 7% of the vote in a district will be allotted seats. This rule prevents smaller parties from taking seats and does allow for multiple active parties though that does not prevent United Russia from maintaining a majority.

COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Section II

Time—1 hour and 40 minutes

Directions: You have 1 hour and 40 minutes to answer five short-answer concept questions, one conceptual analysis question, and two country context questions. Unless the directions indicate otherwise, respond to all parts of all eight questions. It is suggested that you take a few minutes to plan and outline each answer. We suggest that you spend approximately 30 minutes total on questions 1 through 5, 30 minutes on question 6, and 40 minutes total on questions 7 and 8. These suggested times do not reflect the weight of the questions as part of your AP exam score. In your responses, use substantive examples where appropriate.

Short-Answer Concepts: We suggest that you spend approximately 30 minutes total on questions 1 through 5.

1. Identify a country in the AP Comparative Government course that uses proportional representation as a part of its electoral system. Explain how legislative seats are allocated in a proportional representation system. Describe the impact of proportional representation electoral rules on a party system.

Great Britain uses proportional representation in its electoral system. In many proportional representation systems, the system is actually a mix of first past the post and proportional representation. The ~~popular~~ ~~dominant~~ parties generally win a majority of legislative positions through the first past the post process, but the remaining legislative positions are left to the leading less popular candidates, giving minor parties representation without actually winning outright an election. Proportional representation electoral rules generally shape party systems into multi-party systems. This is because 3rd parties are represented a long side the major parties, just not to the same extent.

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2018 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 1

Overview

The intent of this question was to assess students' understanding of the effects proportional representation has upon a country's political system. The skills tested were explanatory and descriptive. Students had three specific tasks: to identify a country studied within the AP Comparative Government and Politics course that employs a proportional representation system, to explain how legislative seats are allocated under proportional representation, and to describe the impact that proportional representation has upon a party system.

Sample: 1A

Score: 3

The response earned 1 point for correctly identifying Russia as a country that uses proportional representation as a part of its electoral system. Additional acceptable identifications are Mexico and the UK in Scotland, Wales, and the London Assembly.

The response earned 1 point for explaining, "Legislative seats are allocated according to percent of votes received. Once receiving a minimum threshold percentage of votes, seats are allocated to parties comparatively to percent of votes they received." The response clearly explains that the percentage of votes a party receives equates to the percentage of seats it is granted in the legislature in a proportional representation system. Another acceptable explanation is that parties are rewarded seats in the legislature in proportion to the votes they received.

The response earned 1 point for describing, "The impact of proportional representation electoral rules on the party system is that it encourages greater amounts of parties, as it only requires a certain percent of votes to earn legislative representation." The response clearly demonstrates an understanding that proportional representation systems result in more parties in the legislature. Additional acceptable descriptions include making coalition government more likely and allowing for a wider spectrum of opinions in the legislature.

Sample: 1B

Score: 2

The response earned 1 point for correctly identifying Russia as a country that uses proportional representation as a part of its electoral system. Additional acceptable identifications are Mexico and the UK in Scotland, Wales, and the London Assembly.

The response did not earn a point for explaining, "Any party that earns at least 7% of the vote in a district will be allotted seats." While this describes the threshold often involved in a proportional representation system, it does not adequately explain that the percentage of votes a party receives equates to the percentage of seats that it is granted in the legislature in a proportional representation system. Another acceptable explanation is that parties are rewarded seats in the legislature in proportion to the votes they received.

The response earned 1 point for describing, "This rule does allow for multiple active parties though that does not prevent United Russia from maintaining a majority." The response clearly demonstrates an understanding that proportional representation systems result in more parties in the legislature. Additional acceptable descriptions include making coalition government more likely and allowing for a wider spectrum of opinions in the legislature.

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Question 1 (continued)

Sample: 1C

Score: 1

The response did not earn a point for incorrectly identifying Great Britain as a country that uses proportional representation as a part of its electoral system. Acceptable identifications are Mexico, Russia, or specifying the the UK in Scotland and Wales, and the London General Assembly. The United Kingdom is not an acceptable identification because the House of Commons uses a single-member district system.

The response did not earn a point for explaining, “In many proportional representation systems, the system is actually a mix of first past the post and proportional representation” because the response describes a mixed system, rather than a proportional system. One acceptable explanation is that the percentage of votes a party receives equates to the percentage of seats that the party is granted in the legislature in a proportional representation system. Another acceptable explanation is that parties are rewarded seats in the legislature in proportion to the votes they received.

The response earned 1 point for describing, “Proportional representation electoral rules generally shape party systems into multi-party systems.” The response clearly demonstrates an understanding that proportional representation systems result in more parties in the legislature. Additional acceptable descriptions include making coalition government more likely and allowing for a wider spectrum of opinions in the legislature.